



# NO FLY ZONE



## Gov't use of Chinese drones in limbo as Congress weighs ban

In this Sept. 16, 2015 file photo, West Salem police chief Charles Ashbeck flies his department's new drone in West Salem, Wis.

Associated Press

By **MATT O'BRIEN**  
AP Technology Writer

More than a year after the U.S. Interior Department grounded hundreds of Chinese-made drones it was using to track wildfires and monitor dams, volcanoes and

wildlife, it's starting to look like they won't be flying again any time soon — if ever. A measure moving through Congress would impose a five-year ban on U.S. government purchases of drones manufactured or assembled in China.

It reflects bipartisan concerns that devices made by companies such as DJI, which is based in Shenzhen, China, could facilitate Chinese spying on critical infrastructure. But a ban could create problems for government users, since

DJI dominates the global market for the small, low-altitude drones used by hobbyists, photographers, and many businesses and governments.

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## Gov't use of Chinese drones in limbo as Congress weighs ban



In a Thursday Sept. 28, 2017 file photo, a Maine State Police unmanned aerial vehicle hovers outside Maine State Police headquarters at the Central Maine Commerce Center in Augusta, Me.

### Continued from Front

There aren't many affordable and reliable alternatives, said Carrick Detweiler, the CEO of Drone Amplified, which provides fire suppression payloads to drones operated by Interior and the U.S. Forest Service. "Everyone I talk to in the federal government is moving away from DJI whether or not these bills are passed," said Detweiler, who is also a computer science professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. "Everyone wants a U.S. system to be there and to work, it's just that the U.S. drone industry was killed off by DJI a decade ago. It's going to take three or four years before we're at parity."

The proposed ban was recently folded into the broader American Innovation and Competitiveness Act, which was nearing passage in the Senate before it was abruptly postponed Friday. While the ban wouldn't go into effect until 2023, many federal agencies have already imposed temporary restrictions on the use of Chinese drones. Some have begun to phase them out entirely. But the ban could create

other headaches. Because it would also ban federal funds from being used to buy or operate Chinese drones, it could hit police departments that rely on federal help to field new equipment. The Department of Homeland Security started halting such grants for Chinese-made drones last year. The Interior Department said it flew more than 11,000 drone flights in 2019 before temporarily grounding its drones over cybersecurity concerns at the end of that year. Its drone program has been largely on hiatus since then, except for some emergency flights that are granted a waiver. In March, it started to make it easier to fly emergency missions for wildland fire response and search-and-rescue operations. Inside the government, the drone ban has met some resistance from officials eager to get their existing drone fleets back in the air for missions that don't require secrecy. Some trade groups have argued that any drone restrictions should be based on specific security standards, not their country of origin.

A summary of a recent

Pentagon report obtained by The Associated Press found "no malicious code or intent" in drone software made by DJI and used by the Interior Department. The report assessed software used to operate DJI's "Government Edition" drones and some fixes that were made to address data leakage vulnerabilities found in earlier audits.

That May 6 document also made a big endorsement. "The DJI Government Edition versions that were tested, show no malicious code or intent and are recommended for use by government entities and forces working with US services," wrote the author, Adam Prater, a technology expert and second chief warrant officer with the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

Prater declined to comment, saying he wasn't authorized to speak to the media. The Interior Department also declined to comment. In a statement, DJI spokesperson Adam Lisberg called the report summary "the strongest confirmation to date" of the safety and security of the company's drones.

Outside experts, however,

panned the Pentagon conclusions. "It's clear that this software was not designed for security at all," said Steven Aftergood, director of the Federation of American Scientists Project on Government Secrecy. Mike Monnik, an Australian expert, said there's a "dangerous" risk that outside agents could pull data off the drones given their many unfixed software concerns. Monnik, the chief technology officer at DroneSec, a firm that researches drone cybersecurity vulnerabilities, added that only cutting off the drones entirely from the internet could ensure the security of their data. National security concerns about DJI drones have lingered since at least 2017, when a document from U.S. customs authorities alleged that the drones likely provided China with access to critical infrastructure and law enforcement data. DJI has repeatedly denied the allegations, but political concerns about Chinese technology accelerated amid President Donald Trump's broader trade war against China.

Last year, the Pentagon began promoting American-made — and more

expensive — alternatives to DJI. The Defense Department in August gave a seal of approval to California drone-maker Skydio, French tech company Parrot and three other firms to supply U.S.-manufactured drones to agencies across the federal government. But since then, the Pentagon has acknowledged that many military-grade drones still present risks because they rely on components made in China. In December, the Commerce Department placed DJI on a list of blacklisted Chinese firms subject to export restrictions on national security grounds.

DJI has tried to counter such concerns, enabling an internet "kill switch" on more drones so that commercial and government users can halt data transmission on sensitive flying missions. Its products have been favored by many local and regional governments in the U.S. for their price and reliability, but a federal ban could damage its reputation among those buyers.

Aftergood said he could see a case for DJI only in situations where security isn't a top concern. □

Associated Press

# Chauvin makes appearance on federal charges in Floyd's death

By AMY FORLITI

Associated Press

**MINNEAPOLIS (AP)** — The former Minneapolis police officer convicted of murder in George Floyd's death made his initial appearance Tuesday in federal court to face charges alleging he violated Floyd's civil rights by pinning the Black man to the pavement with his knee.

Derek Chauvin, 45, wore an orange prison shirt when he appeared in federal court via videoconference from Minnesota's maximum-security prison in Oak Park Heights. He's being held there as he awaits sentencing following his April conviction on murder and manslaughter charges.

Chauvin, in his first public appearance since he was escorted out of a Minnesota courtroom following his conviction, was in a small room during the hearing, with a white brick wall behind him and a window in front of him. He wore a surgical mask at first but took it off when U.S. Magistrate Judge Becky Thorson said he could. He sat with his hands resting on a table in front of him and occasionally took notes. He leaned forward and squinted slightly, as if he was listening intently to the judge's words, and leaned forward



In this April 20, 2021, file image from video, defendant, former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin, listens to verdicts at his trial for the 2020 death of George Floyd at the Hennepin County Courthouse in Minneapolis.

Associated Press

even more when he spoke to answer the judge's questions.

Chauvin stated his name and age, and said he understood the charges against him and his rights. When asked if he knew he had a right to a detention hearing, he said: "I do now, Your Honor... Probably in light of my current circumstances I believe that would be a moot point." After a brief off-record discussion with his attorney, Eric Nelson, he waived his

right to a detention hearing, and Thorson ordered him into federal custody.

The Minnesota Department of Corrections confirmed that he will be in federal custody but will stay in the state prison.

The federal charges allege Chauvin violated Floyd's rights as he restrained him face-down while he was handcuffed and not resisting. Three other former officers — J. Kueng, Thomas Lane and Tou Thao — face similar federal charges.

Chauvin is also charged in a separate indictment alleging he violated the rights of a 14-year-old boy in 2017.

Floyd, 46, repeatedly said he couldn't breathe as Chauvin pinned him to the ground. Kueng and Lane helped restrain Floyd — Kueng knelt on Floyd's back and Lane held down Floyd's legs. Thao held back bystanders and kept them from intervening during the 9 1/2-minute restraint that was captured on bystand-

er video and led to worldwide protests and calls for change in policing.

While all four officers are charged broadly with depriving Floyd of his rights while acting under government authority, the counts that name Chauvin allege he violated Floyd's right to be free from unreasonable seizure and from unreasonable force by a police officer. They also allege he and the others deprived Floyd of liberty without due process when they failed to provide him with medical care.

Nelson argued during Chauvin's murder trial that the officer acted reasonably and Floyd died because of underlying health issues and drug use. He has filed a request for a new trial. To bring federal charges in deaths involving police, prosecutors must believe an officer acted under the "color of law," or government authority, and willfully deprived someone's constitutional rights. That's a high legal standard. An accident, bad judgment or simple negligence on the officer's part isn't enough to support federal charges; prosecutors have to prove the officers knew what they were doing was wrong in that moment but did it anyway. □

# U.S. formally ends policy for asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Biden administration on Tuesday formally ended a Trump-era immigration policy that forced asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court.

A seven-page memo by Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas marked the end of the "Migrant Protection Protocols," which returned about 70,000 asylum-seekers to Mexico from January 2019 until it was halted on President Joe Biden's first day in office two years later.

The announcement appeared to be a foregone conclusion after Biden promised as a candidate to end the policy, known in-

formally as "Remain in Mexico," but he left a window open by ordering a review before shutting it down permanently.

Mayorkas said keeping the policy intact or modifying it "would not be consistent with this Administration's vision and values and would be a poor use of the Department's resources." He said the costs would far outweigh any benefits.

The policy coincided with a sharp decline of asylum-seekers at the border, but critics noted that people were hampered by violent conditions in Mexico, lack of access to lawyers and difficulty making it to court. Mayorkas acknowledged those concerns by noting

the high rate of denied claims for failing to appear in court and the lack of housing, income and safety in Mexico.

Since Feb. 19, about 11,200 people with active cases have been allowed to return to the United States to wait for a ruling, a process that can take years in the backlogged court system. The administration has yet to say if tens of thousands more whose cases were either dismissed or denied will get another chance.

The administration has largely kept in place pandemic-related powers introduced by President Donald Trump in March 2020 to expel people to Mexico without an opportunity to



Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas speaks about aviation security ahead of the summer travel season during a news conference at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Tuesday, May 25, 2021, in Arlington, Va.

Associated Press

seek asylum, justified on grounds of protecting public health.

Mayorkas acknowledged

planning for those pandemic-related powers to be lifted but was light on specifics. □

# Report tells of sexual assault, racism at military institute

By **BEN FINLEY**  
Associated Press

The Virginia Military Institute has tolerated and failed to address institutional racism and sexism and must be held accountable for making changes, according to a state-sanctioned report released Tuesday.

The 145-page report, put together by an independent law firm at the request of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, states that "racial slurs and jokes are not uncommon" and "contribute to an atmosphere of hostility toward minorities."

The report also said that sexual assault is prevalent yet inadequately addressed at the nation's oldest state-supported military college. A survey found that 14% of female cadets reported being sexually assaulted, while 63% said that a fellow cadet had told them that he or she was a victim of sexual assault.

A racial disparity also exists among cadets who have been dismissed by the school's student-run honor court, the report stated. Cadets of color represent 23% of the corps but make up 41% of those dismissed since 2011.

"The racist and misogynistic



Virginia Military Institute class of 2021 watch during a change of command parade and ceremony on the parade grounds at the school in Lexington, Va., in this Friday, May 14, 2021, file photo. Associated Press

acts and outcomes uncovered during this investigation are disturbing," the report states. "Although VMI has no explicitly racist or sexist policies that it enforces, the facts reflect an overall racist and sexist culture." The report notes that VMI has begun to make changes. But it also says that VMI "will likely follow through on its promised reforms only if it is forced to do so."

The report follows a monthslong probe ordered by Democratic Gov. Ralph

Northam and other state officials after The Washington Post reported that Black cadets and alumni faced "relentless racism."

The Post's October story described threats of lynching as well as a white professor reminiscing in class about her father's Ku Klux Klan membership. The newspaper cited interviews with more than a dozen current and former students of color at the prestigious school. Independent law firm Barnes & Thornburg con-

ducted the investigation. An interim report released in March documented responses from students, faculty and alumni about witnessing or experiencing racism and sexism.

VMI's first Black superintendent, retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins, said in a statement that the school has no place for racism and sexism. He said there is "always room for improvement" and has developed an action plan following "deep dives" into VMI's poli-

cies. Wins said that the report's recommendations will be "evaluated through the lens of the VMI mission and our unique method of education, and, where appropriate, be integrated." "VMI has a long history of improvement. Now is no different," Wins said. "The Institute will move forward and will be better because of this chapter in our history."

VMI was founded in 1839 in Lexington, a historic town in western Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. The school educated Generals George Patton and George Marshall. But it's also indelibly tied to the nation's history of racism and sexism.

A prominent statue of Confederate Gen. Stonewall Jackson, who taught at the school, wasn't taken down until December. VMI didn't accept African Americans until 1968 or accept women until after a 1996 U.S. Supreme Court ruling.

In anticipation of the report's release, VMI released a statement acknowledging incidents of racism and said that the school "cannot fulfill its mission of producing educated and honorable men and women if it allows racism or bias to go unchecked." □

## Chicago police encouraged by drop in homicides in May



Chicago police investigate in the 700 block of North Spaulding Avenue, where a 40-year-old man was shot multiple times while he was riding in a car on the West Side on Memorial Day, Monday night, May 31, 2021, in Chicago.

Associated Press

By **DON BABWIN**  
Associated Press

**CHICAGO (AP)** — Chicago saw a drop in the number of homicides in

May compared with the same month last year and it ended with fewer killings than any Memorial Day weekend in a decade, the

police superintendent said Tuesday.

And while there have been more homicides so far this year — 252 compared with 240 for the same five-month period last year — May ended with 65 homicides compared with 84 during the same month in 2020.

Police dispatched more officers to the street for the holiday weekend, when gun crime typically spikes, and the department reported 32 people were shot, including four fatally. Last year, 49 people were shot, 10 of whom died.

Superintendent David Brown said the holiday weekend's drop in homicides came after Mayor

Lori Lightfoot announced a new strategy in which police, educators, library workers and others would be dispatched to 15 police beats on the West and South sides, where much of the city's violent crime occurs.

"That's a new approach ... that includes many departments out in the field during the hours where violence is peaking," Brown said.

He also said that Violence Interrupters, a community group made up of former gang members and others, played a major role in reducing gun violence — something they couldn't do as effectively last year because the coronavi-

rus pandemic prevented many of them from going out on the streets.

"Now they are back (and) they have stepped into the gap, and are out there until 2, 3, 4 in the morning," he said.

After 2020, when the number of homicides and shootings spiked dramatically from the previous year, it seemed earlier this year that 2021 was going to be even deadlier. But Brown said he was encouraged by the trend in the latest statistics released by the department.

"It's had a significant impact early on," Brown said. "This approach is a great launch for the rest of the summer." □

# Vatican law criminalizes abuse of adults by priests, laity

By NICOLE WINFIELD

Associated Press

**VATICAN CITY (AP)** — Pope Francis has changed Catholic Church law to explicitly criminalize the sexual abuse of adults by priests who abuse their authority and to say that laypeople who hold church office also can be sanctioned for similar sex crimes.

The new provisions, released Tuesday after 14 years of study, were contained in the revised criminal law section of the Vatican's Code of Canon Law, the in-house legal system that covers the 1.3 billion-member Catholic Church and operates independently from civil laws.

The most significant changes are contained in two articles, 1395 and 1398, which aim to address shortcomings in the church's handling of sexual abuse. The law recognizes that adults, not only children, can be victimized by priests who abuse their authority. The revisions also say that laypeople holding church positions, such as school principals or parish economists, can be punished for abusing minors as well as adults. The Vatican also criminalized priests "grooming" minors or vulnerable adults to compel them to engage in



Mons. Filippo Iannone, right, and Mons. Juan Ignacio Arrieta Ochoa de Chinchetru hold a press conference to illustrate changes in the Church's Canon law, at the Vatican, Tuesday, June 1, 2021. Associated Press

pornography. The update represents the first time church law has officially recognized as a criminal act the method used by sexual predators to build relationships with victims they have targeted for sexual exploitation.

The new law, which is set to take effect on Dec. 8, also removes much of the discretion that long allowed bishops and religious superiors to ignore or cover up abuse, making clear those in positions of authority will be held responsible if they

fail to properly investigate or sanction predator priests. A bishop can be removed from office for "culpable negligence" or if he does not report sex crimes to church authorities, although the canon law foresees no punishment for failing to report suspected crimes to police.

Ever since the 1983 code first was issued, lawyers and bishops have complained it was inadequate for dealing with the sexual abuse of minors since it required time-consuming trials. Vic-

tims and their advocates, meanwhile, argued the code left too much discretion in the hands of bishops who had an interest in covering up for their priests.

The Vatican issued piecemeal changes over the years to address problems and loopholes, most significantly requiring all cases to be sent to the Holy See for review and allowing for a more streamlined administrative process to defrock a priest if the evidence against him was overwhelming. More recently,

Francis passed new laws to punish bishops and religious superiors who failed to protect their flocks. The new criminal code incorporates those changes and goes beyond them, while also recognizing accused priests are presumed innocent until proven otherwise.

The Vatican has long considered any sexual relations between a priest and an adult as sinful but consensual, believing that adults are able to offer or refuse consent purely by the nature of their age. But amid the #MeToo movement and scandals of seminarians and nuns being sexually abused by their superiors, the Vatican has come to realize that adults can be victimized, if there is a power imbalance in the relationship.

That dynamic was most clearly recognized in the scandal over ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the former archbishop of Washington. Even though the Vatican knew for years he slept with his seminarians, McCarrick was only put on trial after someone came forward saying McCarrick had abused him as a youth. Francis eventually defrocked McCarrick in 2019. □

## U.S., Japan reaffirm alliance amid China territorial claims

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

Associated Press

**TOKYO (AP)** — The new head of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command held talks with top Japanese officials on Tuesday and reaffirmed their alliance amid China's increasingly assertive claims to contested areas in the region, officials said. Adm. John Aquilino, who assumed the post in April, and Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi shared their concern about China's "continuous and intensified attempt to unilaterally change the status quo in the East and South China Seas," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"Under the current circum-

stances, the importance of the alliance is greater than ever," Motegi told Aquilino

in his opening remarks. The two sides also reaffirmed the importance of



Admiral John C. Aquilino, left, Commander of the United States Indo-Pacific Command, is welcomed by Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga at the start of their meeting at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo, Japan, Tuesday, June 1, 2021.

Associated Press

peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and agreed to further strengthen their joint response capability and deterrence to achieve a "free and open Indo-Pacific."

Japan and the U.S. have been promoting the goal of a free and open Indo-Pacific, a defense and economic framework, in a group known as the Quad, which also includes Australia and India, that is seen as a move to counter China's increasing influence in the region. China has criticized the group as an exclusionist bloc based on a Cold War-era mindset.

Japan is looking to bolster its military capabilities amid a deepening territori-

row with China in regional seas. It is increasingly concerned about Chinese activity in and around Japanese-claimed waters surrounding the Japanese-controlled Senkaku islands, which China also claims and calls Diaoyu.

Japan's postwar constitution has limited the use of force to self defense, but the country has in recent years expanded its military role, capability and budget. Aquilino also held similar talks with Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi and top Japanese military officials and discussed North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. The Foreign Ministry said. □

# World Bank: Lebanon's crisis among world's worst since 1850s

By **BASSEM MROUE**

**Associated Press**

**BEIRUT (AP)** — Lebanon's severe economic and financial crisis is likely to rank as one of the worst the world has seen in more than 150 years, the World Bank said in a report released Tuesday.

The World Bank said that since late 2019, Lebanon has been facing compounded challenges, including its largest peacetime economic and financial crisis, the spread of coronavirus and a massive blast at Beirut's port last year that is considered as one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history. The crisis has worsened in recent months amid a paralyzing power struggle between the president and prime minister-designate that has delayed the formation of a new government. The Cabinet of outgoing Prime Minister Hassan Diab resigned days after the Aug. 4 blast, and the country has been without a fully functioning government since. The explosion in the Port of Beirut killed 211 people, wounded more than 6,000 and damaged



In this Monday, March 22, 2021, file photo, a man rides his bicycle past garbage containers set on fire by protesters blocking a main road in front the Lebanese Central Bank building, background, in Beirut, Lebanon.

**Associated Press**

entire neighborhoods. In the face of these colossal challenges, continuous policy inaction and the absence of a fully functioning government threaten already dire socio-economic conditions and a fragile social peace with no clear turning point in the horizon,

the World Bank report said. "The economic and financial crisis is likely to rank in the top 10, possibly top 3, most severe crises episodes globally since the mid-nineteenth century," it added. The report said the country's gross domestic product is projected to contract

9.5% in 2021, after shrinking by 20.3% in 2020 and 6.7% the year before. Lebanon's gross domestic product plummeted from close to \$55 billion in 2018 to an estimated \$33 billion in 2020, while GDP per capita fell by around 40% in dollar terms, the report said.

"Such a brutal contraction is usually associated with conflicts or wars," the World Bank said.

The report was released two days before the World Bank's vice president for the Middle East and North Africa, Ferid Belhaj, and Merza Hussain Hasan, its executive director, were set to arrive in Lebanon to meet with Lebanese officials and urge them to address the crisis "with urgency," a World Bank spokeswoman said.

For decades, Lebanon has been dominated by the same political elites, many of them former warlords and militia commanders from the civil war. Corruption has been widespread over the past decades, brining the tiny country to near bankruptcy.

In March 2020, Lebanon defaulted on paying back its debt for the first time in its history as the local currency lost more than 85% of its value. Tens of thousands have lost their jobs while many others left the country seeking opportunities abroad. Nearly half the country's 5 million people live in poverty. □



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks to the Israeli Parliament in Jerusalem, Sunday, May 30, 2021.

**Associated Press**

By **LAURIE KELLMAN**

**TEL AVIV, Israel (AP)** — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday he's prepared to risk tension with the U.S. if that is what it takes to neutralize Iran's nuclear capabilities. The embattled premier, whose political future is in question just 11 days out from a bruising war, said Israel's biggest threat re-

mains the possibility of a nuclear-armed Iran. He said Israel is prepared to prevent that from happening even if the United States and other nations succeed in reinstating the 2015 Iran nuclear accord. "If we have to choose, I hope it doesn't happen, between friction with our great friend the United States and eliminating the

## Netanyahu: Israel would risk 'friction' with U.S. over Iran

existential threat — eliminating the existential threat" wins, Netanyahu said.

He spoke at a ceremony for David Barnea, the new chief of Israel's Mossad spy agency. Iran has accused Israel of being behind a number of attacks killing Iranian nuclear scientists or sabotaging Iranian nuclear facilities.

More talks on the subject were expected this week when Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz travels to Washington. He's slated to meet with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin and U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan about Iran and stability in the region.

Netanyahu's comments come amid ongoing talks in Vienna between nations seeking to update and

reinstatement the 2015 agreement, in line with President Joe Biden's campaign promise. His predecessor, Republican President Donald Trump, pulled the U.S. out of the accord in 2018 and imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic. The deal places curbs on Iranian nuclear activities in exchange for relief from crippling economic sanctions.

Netanyahu staunchly opposes the agreement, arguing that it does not have enough safeguards to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Israel also says the deal must address Iran's support for militant groups, its military actions across the region and its development of long-range missiles capable of striking Israel.

Iran says its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only and says the nuclear deal should be reinstated without any changes. Netanyahu spoke about Iran on Tuesday as his rivals in the Knesset huddled to try to form a coalition government that would end Netanyahu's 12-year rule. The developments come amid a fragile truce between Israel and Hamas' militant rulers in the Gaza Strip after a brutal 11-day war that killed more than 250 people, most of them Palestinian. Hamas, which opposes Israel's right to exist and is considered a terrorist group by Israel, the U.S. and other Western countries, receives millions of dollars of military aid from Iran each year. □

# In Brazil's Amazon, rivers rise to record levels

By **FERNANDO CRISPIM and DIANE JEANTET**

Associated Press

**MANAUS, Brazil (AP)** — Rivers around the biggest city in Brazil's Amazon rainforest have swelled to levels unseen in over a century of record-keeping, according to data published Tuesday by Manaus' port authorities, straining a society that has grown weary of increasingly frequent flooding.

The Rio Negro was at its highest level since records began in 1902, with a depth of 29.98 meters (98 feet) at the port's measuring station. The nearby Solimoes and Amazon rivers were also nearing all-time highs, flooding streets and houses in dozens of municipalities and affecting some 450,000 people in the region.

Higher-than-usual precipitation is associated with the La Nina phenomenon, when currents in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean affect global climate patterns. Environmental experts and organizations



A street vendor pushes his mobile stall through a street flooded by the Negro River, in downtown Manaus, Amazonas state, Brazil, Tuesday, June 1, 2021.

Associated Press

including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration say there is strong evidence that human activity and global warming

are altering the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including La Nina.

Seven of the 10 biggest floods in the Amazon basin have occurred in the past

13 years, data from Brazil's state-owned Geological Survey shows.

"If we continue to destroy the Amazon the way we do, the climatic anomalies will become more and

more accentuated," said Virgilio Viana, director of the Sustainable Amazon Foundation, a nonprofit. "Greater floods on the one hand, greater droughts on the other."

Large swaths of Brazil are currently drying up in a severe drought, with a possible shortfall in power generation from the nation's hydroelectric plants and increased electricity prices, government authorities have warned.

But in Manaus, 66-year-old Julia Simas has water ankle-deep in her home. Simas has lived in the working-class neighborhood of Sao Jorge since 1974 and is used to seeing the river rise and fall with the seasons. Simas likes her neighborhood because it is safe and clean. But the quickening pace of the floods in the last decade has her worried.

"From 1974 until recently, many years passed and we wouldn't see any water. It was a normal place," she said. □

## 18th century graveyard found at former Caribbean plantation

An 18th century burial ground has been discovered at a former sugar plantation on the Dutch Caribbean island of St. Eustatius, officials said Monday, and archaeologists said it likely contains the remains of slaves and could provide a trove of information on the lives as enslaved people.

Government officials said 48 skeletons had been found at the site so far, most of them males, but also some females and infants.

Alexandre Hinton, the director of the St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research, said many more remains were expected to lie in the graves at the former Golden Rock Plantation.

"We are predicting that the number of individuals buried here will surpass the burial site discovered at Newton Plantation on Barbados, where 104 en-

slaved Africans were excavated. This is one of the largest sites of its kind ever discovered in the Caribbean," she said.

Authorities said the site was found while archaeologists checked an area needed for expansion of an airport.

"We knew the potential for archaeological discoveries in this area was high, but this cemetery exceeds all expectations," Hinton said.

Given the location near the former plantation, Hinton said the graves most likely contain the remains of enslaved people.

"Initial analysis indicates that these are people of African descent," she said. "To date, we have found two individuals with dental modification that is a West African custom. Typically plantation owners did not allow enslaved persons to do this. These individuals are thus most likely first

generation enslaved people who were shipped to St. Eustatius."

The majority of the burials contain remnants of coffins, coffin nails and objects that were buried with the deceased, such as several intact tobacco pipes, beads and ceramic plates. A coin from 1737 depicting King George II of England was found resting on a coffin lid.

Experts at several universities around the world will analyze the remains to learn more about the lives of the buried individuals. Hinton said Leiden University in the Netherlands will conduct "stable isotope analysis" to determine the peoples' diets as well as whether they were born on the island. Harvard will do DNA analysis to find where the people came from, and England's Northumbria University will do protein studies to discover what diseases they might



An archaeologist shows a coin found on top of the remains of an enslaved man, dated 1737, at the former Golden Rock plantation west of the international Airport in Oranjestad, on the Dutch Caribbean island of St. Eustatius, on the Leeward Islands, Thursday, May 27, 2021.

Associated Press

have suffered.

One of the most important outcomes of the research will be a more thorough understanding of the lives of slaves in the Caribbean. Most of what is known about their lives comes from the writings of people in power, such as colonial administrators and planta-

tion owners, sources that can be biased or incomplete.

St. Eustatius, which lies in northeastern part of the Caribbean, was colonized by the Dutch in 1636 and became an important transit port for the regional trade in sugar and slaves from West Africa. □

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## KLM Aruba Marathon Covid-19 proof approved race

**ORANJESTAD - The KLM Aruba Marathon has been given green light by the Aruban authorities for a Covid-19 proof approved race on June 5th and June 6th 2021. Participants need Proof of a negative test or complete vaccination.**

### Here are the guidelines for the race

How to collect your start number and enter the race:

Wearing a face mask is mandatory and only participants allowed, no friends and family

You present evidence of your COVID-19 vaccination (with proof of full vaccination dated at least one week prior to the event = second shot one week before race date OR, you present a negative PCR COVID-19 test dated 72 hours before the event OR as third option we offer a free PCR test. If the result, in 15 minutes, is negative, you will be given access to the race, if the result is positive, the Covid-19 rules of Aruba will come into effect.

On top of the above procedure a running protocol is in effect:

To avoid crowds:

- 5km race is rescheduled to Saturday June 5th, 2021
- 10km, Half and Full Marathon stay on Sunday June 6th
- Race packet pick-up period extended
- Social distance always!
- Face mask and start number mandatory in start area
- Face mask mandatory during race packet pick up
- You can only pick up your own start number
- Pasta party will be pasta diner
- No public
- No After party or celebration party

To avoid crowds the Race Packet period pickup extended:

International Participants, who are fully vaccinated or have an accurate PCR test, negative result.

Thursday June 3rd and Friday June 4th from 08:00 am- 06:00 pm and Saturday June 5th from 08:00 am - 12:30 pm. Late arrivals on appointment.

Location: Parking Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort, only entrance via the service road in between Hilton

and Barceló

### Aruba residents Fully Vaccinated

(second shot one week before the race) or with an accurate PCR test/ negative result)

When? Only on Thursday June 3rd and Friday June 4th, 08:00 am - 06:00 pm

Location: Parking Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort, only entrance via the service road in between Hilton and Barceló

Aruban residents, 18 years and older, who are not Fully Vaccinated (second shot one week before the Race) we offer a FREE fast Covid-19 Test

After a negative result, we hand you the start number, T-shirt and additional orders.

### No Public allowed

Public is not allowed at the start and finish. It is not allowed to wait for each other at the finish. Meet afterwards at home, at your hotel, at your car- anywhere, but not near the start and finish area! Avoid crowd at all times. Via our KLM Aruba Marathon App, available in the app store and google play you can follow family and friends online. Friends and family can follow the participants via the KLM Aruba Marathon App. Winners can pick up their award

### NEW Start times

In the past all distances started on the same day and all participants would finish approximately at the same time. This Covid-19 Proof Approved Race is divided over 2 days and because of the different starting times runners will not finish at the same time.

### NEW! Saturday June 5th

5km Runners:



Start 5:00 pm (Est. Finish time 5:30 pm)

5km Walkers Start 6:00 pm (Est. Finish time 7:00 pm)

### Sunday June 6th

Full Marathon

Start 3:30 am (Est. Finish time 7:30 am max 9:30 am)

Time cut off: runners have six hours to complete the course

Half Marathon

Start 4:30 am (Est. Finish time 6:30 am)

10km Runners:

Start 5:45 am (Est. Finish time 6:45 am)

10km Walkers:

Start 6:15 am (Est. Finish time 8:15 am)

We are very grateful to Directie Volksgezondheid Aruba, Bureau Rampenbestrijding, Korps Politie Aruba, Instituto Biba Saludabel y Activo, for their time, open minded approach, input and approval. On the website [www.klmarubamarathon.com](http://www.klmarubamarathon.com) you can find all information (even a traffic plan how to reach the Hotels during the race) Looking forwards to a Legendary race! ☑



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## An Annual LGBT Pride Celebration

**ORANJESTAD** - Every year, during the month of June, the LGBT community celebrates in a number of different ways. Across the globe, various events are held during this special month as a way of recognizing the influence LGBT people have had around the world. Why was June chosen? Because it is when the Stonewall Riots took place, way back in 1969.

As well as being a month long celebration, Pride month is also an opportunity to peacefully protest and raise political awareness of current issues facing the community. Parades are a prominent feature of Pride month, and there are many street parties, community events, poetry readings, public speaking, street festivals and educational sessions all of which are covered by mainstream media and attracting millions of participants.

The New York Pride Parade is one of the largest and most wellknown parades to take place, with an estimated 500,000 people participating in it by the time it had reached its 25th anniversary.

Pride Month is so important because it marks the start of huge change within the LGBT+ community, as well as the wider societal implications. Although attitudes and injustice still remain, we have come a long way since the riots of 1969 and by continuing in this long standing tradition we continue to raise awareness, improve the attitudes of society and encourage inclusiveness. #Pride2020

### What were the Stonewall Riots?

The riots were prompted by a raid that took place during the early morning, at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, Manhattan. The LGBT community held a series of spontaneous, often violent demonstrations to protest against the raid and calling for the establishment of places that gays and lesbians could go and be open about their sexual orientation. In such places there should be no fears of being arrested. The riots served as a catalyst for the rights of LGBT people, and within 6 months, 2 gay activist groups had formed in New York. Over the years since the

event, many gay rights organisations have been formed. Not just in the US but around the world.

### What is LGBT or Gay Pride?

It is a movement that celebrates sexual diversity. For lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people it is a way of protesting about discrimination and violence. It promotes their dignity, equal rights, self-affirmation and is a way of increasing society's awareness of the issues they face.

### Who Started the June Celebration?

Known as the "Mother of Pride", it was Brenda Howard who coordinated the first LGBT Pride march. As well as sparking the idea for a week of events around Pride Day. These events then developed into the annual LGBT celebrations held every June.

### LGBT Community Aruba

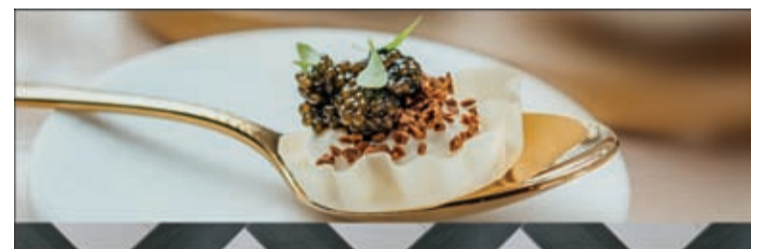
Equality is a human right and on Aruba we are open to this right. Everyone deserves to be treated equally. Currently same-sex couples marriage is not allowed. Couples who want to get married can do this in Holland, Saba and Bonaire and afterwards can register their marriage in Aruba. However the registration does not give the couple the same right as a opposite-sex couple. Legislation of this right is still in discussion. The Aruban Government initially did not recognize these marriages, but was challenged by a lesbian couple who had legally married in the Netherlands and then moved to the island. The case went to the Dutch Supreme Court, which ruled on 13 April 2007 that the Kingdom's constituent countries must recognize all of each other's marriages. Same-sex couples cannot legally marry on the island itself.

Aruba is frequently referred to as one of the Caribbean's most LGBT-friendly islands, with various venues, hotels and restaurants catering to LGBT clientele or otherwise advertising as "LGBT-friendly". Several specific gay bars and clubs have opened in the capital city of Oranjestad. According to local LGBT group AFLA, "Aruba has always been accepting, as long as it's not in their face. People are out, but discreetly out.



There has never been anything official. There are numerous LGBT associations in Aruba, including Equality

Aruba (Igualdad Aruba), Equal Rights Aruba and Alternative Lifestyle Federation Aruba (AFLA). □



**infini**  
by Uva Cava

Taste limitless possibilities at Infini, where Chef Urvin Croes and his team explores without boundaries and steps with both feet outside of the box to create his most sensational dishes yet. This meticulously designed restaurant located inside Blue Residences on scenic Eagle Beach is a chef's table concept with limited seating where diners are able to interact with the staff and other guests alike throughout the evening.

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## Foundation National Park Aruba's off-road ban based on environmental impact report

**SANTA CRUZ** - Fundacion Parke Nacional Aruba (FPNA) executes her responsibilities as a nature conservation organization. In doing so, high-impact activities in FPNA management areas – including Parke Nacional Arikok – are monitored and regulated. FPNA introduced their new policy with regards to ATV's, UTV's and SUV's. They ban ATV's which came into effect June 1st, 2020 and restricted the number of UTV's and SUV's as of June 1st, and ban UTV's as of October 31st, 2020.

Where necessary – and in accordance with national legislation and FPNA's articles of association – man-



agement measures and actions are taken to safeguard the nature under the organization's protection and care. Monitoring and surveying high impact activities is a necessary management policy. Hence

in 2019 and 2020, FPNA surveyed the impact of off-road driving (ORD) in Parke Nacional Arikok. In 2019 the entrance of Shete was closed to reduce the impacted area, with Conchi remaining accessible

via the main entrance at San Fuego. Furthermore, surveys carried out in 2019 and 2020 illustrate the continuing social and ecological environmental damage being caused by ORD. The impacts recorded from 2018 to 2020 were: – Dust Impact on vegetation – Sedimentation in rooi systems – Terrigenous sedimentation in the adjacent Marine Protected Area (MPA Arikok) – Unauthorized Road Creation and Road Widening – Covid-19 park closure's positive impact on Flora and Fauna of Parke Nacional Arikok – Presence Protected Fauna & Protected Fauna Roadkill – ORD engine oil spill in Parke Nacional – ORD

accidents in Parke Nacional Arikok Based on these preliminary findings, further research is being carried out for other environmental impacts, and adhering to the precautionary principle, FPNA has developed a new policy for ORD in Parke Nacional Arikok in order to mitigate the high impact of ORD. This new policy has been in effect since June 01, 2020 and can be found on the FPNA website – [www.arubanationalpark.org](http://www.arubanationalpark.org) – under the title 'Policy Document. Managing Nature Conservation and High Impact Motorized Traffic' (FPNA, May 2020). Source: <https://www.arubanationalpark.org/>. □

## The Freewinds Volunteer Ministers Reached a Milestone: Twenty Million Square Feet Sanitized Throughout the Entire Island



**ORANJESTAD** - For over a year now, the Freewinds Volunteer Ministers have been sanitizing thousands of places from one end of Aruba to the other. These include schools, churches, essential stores, government offices, gyms, restaurants, bars, tourist attractions and more. And this tireless work has been done with the purpose to bring Covid-19 cases down to zero and make Aruba the safest place on earth.

Since the onset of the pandemic the Volunteer Ministers of the Freewinds have worked tirelessly to carry out sanitization and prevention actions which included the distribution of some 100,000 Stay Well booklets with

vital information on prevention, seminars on how to execute these prevention measures and even training others on the use of Decon 7, the strongest agent in the market able of neutralizing 99.9999% of all viruses and bacteria, so they can keep their organizations, clients, employees, families and friends Covid-free.

The Freewinds Volunteer Ministers can be seen 24/7, bringing their calming influence to all the areas they visit by assisting anyone who wants to remain well or wants to know how to keep their loved ones well and prepare for a better future for themselves and the whole island, as without Covid-19 the economy

can have a real chance to fully recover into unprecedented heights.

One of the schools the volunteers recently fogged was St. Jan Kindergarten. After the disinfection was completed the Principal,

Ms. Ann Arends-Hassell, told the in charge of the volunteers: "I thank you guys so much. I see you everywhere and I think that by now you can check off a list of places done that covers all Aruba! You guys are helping so much and

going in so many different places!" To find out how you can protect yourself, your home, school or workplace visit the How to Stay Well Prevention Resource Center online at [www.scientology.org/staywell](http://www.scientology.org/staywell). □

**You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island**

**ORANJESTAD** - Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is ..... Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: [news@arubato-day.com](mailto:news@arubato-day.com) and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. □



# OPEC to increase oil output as global economy recovers

By DAVID McHUGH

AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)

— The OPEC oil cartel and allied producing countries have confirmed plans to restore 2.1 million barrels per day of crude production, balancing fears that continuing COVID-19 outbreaks in some countries will sap demand against the rising need for energy in recovering economies around the globe.

Energy ministers made the decision during an online meeting Tuesday.

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said recent market developments proved that the decision to gradually increase production, originally made in April and reconfirmed Tuesday, was "the right decision." He said that there were still "clouds on the horizon" regarding the recovery and demand for energy.

The cartel decided to stay the course decided at earlier meetings to raise production by 2.1 million barrels per day from May to July. The group planned to add back 350,000 bar-



In this May 20, 2021 photo, a fuel truck driver checks the gasoline tank level at a United Oil gas station in Sunset Blvd., in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

rels per day in June and 440,000 barrels per day in July. At the same time, Saudi Arabia is gradually adding back 1 million barrels in voluntary cuts it made above and beyond its group commitment.

The combined OPEC Plus

format of members led by Saudi Arabia and non-members, chief among them Russia, faces concerns that renewed COVID-19 outbreaks in countries such as India, a major oil consumer, will hurt global demand and weigh on

prices. Oil producing countries made drastic cuts to support prices during the worst of the pandemic slowdown in 2020 and must now judge how much additional oil the market needs as producers slowly add more production.

The economic recovery in the US, Europe and Asia is expected to increase energy demand in the second half of the year as people travel more and use more fuel, whether it's gasoline or jet fuel. The U.S. driving season began over Memorial Day weekend and increasing numbers of Americans have been vaccinated, leaving people feeling freer to travel and take longer trips by car.

On Tuesday the price of benchmark US crude rose 3.6% to \$68.66. Brent crude, the European standard, traded 2.7% higher at \$71.17.

An additional factor complicating market estimates is the possible return to the market of more Iranian oil, depending on the outcome of talks over Iran's nuclear program. Paul Sheldon, chief geopolitical risk analyst at S&P Global Platts, said he expects a framework nuclear deal will be reached before Iran's June 18 election, allowing Iranian supply to rise by 1.05 million barrels per day between May levels and December. □

## OECD head says Biden's global tax proposal is a game changer

By DAVID McHUGH

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)

— The new head of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said Tuesday that he is "quietly optimistic" about reaching an international deal on taxing multinational companies, and he called U.S. President Biden's recent proposal a "game changer."

OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann made the remarks at a news conference after taking over from Angel Gurría, who left office after leading the Paris-based organization since 2006.

Cormann, asked about the prospects for a global taxation deal, replied, "Clearly there are a lot of conversations still on the way. You know, you don't get too far

ahead of yourself, but I'm quietly optimistic."

More than 140 countries are taking part in talks convened by the OECD that focus on a global minimum for corporate taxation to deter big companies from shifting their profits to low-tax jurisdictions, and on taxing multinationals that earn substantial revenue in countries where they have no physical presence, such as internet retailing and digital advertising companies.

The talks had stalled over issues such as whether companies could choose to opt in to any new system, a proposal put forward by the United States under the administration of former President Donald Trump.

Biden has proposed setting at least a 15% minimum

global corporate tax that would put a floor under tax rates and end what Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has called a "race to the bottom" in which tax havens use low rates to attract revenue. The global rate, part of a tax proposal aimed at helping pay for Biden's infrastructure program, also would raise the U.S. corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%.

"I think the approaches taken by the Biden administration in relation to this issue have been a game changer," Cormann said following a ministerial-level meeting of the OECD Council.

"I think that we are in a much better position than we were towards the end of last year," he said. "I'm quietly optimistic that with the level of goodwill that



New Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Mathias Cormann, of Australia, left, and outgoing secretary general Angel Gurría pose during the handover ceremony at the OECD headquarters in Paris, Tuesday, June 1 2021.

Associated Press

was demonstrated by all during the meeting today, if we continue to carry this forward, that there will have an opportunity for a sensible consensus."

The OECD, an international organization with 38 member countries, estimates that governments lose up to \$240 billion a year to

companies that shift earnings among countries to lower their tax bills.

Competition to cut corporate tax rates has been "undermining the United States' and other countries' ability to raise the revenue needed to make critical investments," according to the U.S. Treasury. □

**CROSSWORD**

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

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furniture color 18 Pants part director  
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groove animal Hatcher 31 Pollster's  
20 Stuttgart 6 Bullring 23 Burns or find  
souvenir star Browning 33 Aware  
21 Low digit 7 Disloyal 24 Ranch of  
22 Agassi of 8 Plague pen 37 Crew tool  
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32 Storage  
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34 Mayo  
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35 Computer  
command  
36 Wake up  
38 Run-down

DEPART	DOUG
ARABIA	ELSE
BALANCE	BEAM
SKORT	
PIES	ROMA
POND	MORALE
OLD	MEL JAY
TAIPAN	DOME
REAP	AERO
CLASP	
POMMEL	HORSE
ARIA	DETOUR
DEAN	ANSWER

**Yesterday's answer**

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**A XYDLBAAXR**  
is **LONGFELLOW**

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

**6-2 CRYPTOQUOTE**

L C F L H K C U L K K M K A R F M E  
X V I K L P M V A E J A K R V I K  
O L M K K V X L K X C M K S Z V Q  
V K C F Z E J F L X I Z Z M F Z

— **K V Q E K V T T L Z R**

**Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IT IS WONDERFUL HOW MUCH MAY BE DONE IF WE ARE ALWAYS DOING. — THOMAS JEFFERSON**



In this May 16, 2012, file photo, the Facebook logo is displayed on an iPad in Philadelphia.

## Missing the moment: Virtual reality's breakout still elusive

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Virtual reality — computer generated 3D environments that can range from startlingly realistic to abstract wonderlands — has been on the cusp of wide acceptance for years without ever really taking off.

The pandemic should have been VR's big moment, offering an escape for millions of locked-in households. Special headsets and gloves let people interact with a 360-degree, three-dimensional environment, seemingly a good fit for people stuck indoors. But consumers preferred simpler and more accessible tech like Zoom, Nintendo's Switch and streaming services like Netflix.

It's the latest disappointment in an industry famous for stop-start progress.

Patrick Susmilch, 33, an administrative assistant in Los Angeles, figured it was time for a VR headset after the lockdown began. He has a PlayStation and a Nintendo Switch and was spending about an hour and a half a day gaming when he couldn't do outdoor hobbies like rock climbing at the beginning of the pandemic. He had tried an Oculus when it was still a Kickstarter project in 2013, and thought it would be ready for prime time in 2020.

"I was stuck at home here in L.A.," he said. "I thought

now must be the time."

Industry observers have thought the same thing for years. Facebook was so wowed by early demonstrations of the Oculus Rift back in 2012 that it bought the company for \$2 billion. Rivals like the HTC Vive and Samsung's Gear launched in 2015. The Oculus Rift finally went on sale in 2016. But consumers have balked at the hardware's expense: a headset costs several hundred dollars, the same price as video game consoles that support hundreds of games. Early VR headsets also lacked a game or service that would make them seem indispensable, like web browsers for consumer PCs or the mobile Internet for iPhones. Headsets' hefty weight, slow software, and tendency to sometimes cause nausea also kept VR from taking off. "It's not easy to try to do a work out while you have a 4-pound weight attached to your head," said Susmilch. "And it doesn't feel good to sweat directly into a \$400 dollar piece of electronics you purchased."

Facebook discontinued the Rift last month. Its latest devices have had more success. It launched the \$300 Oculus Quest 2 in October, a cheaper and more sophisticated version of its original \$400 wireless Oculus Quest. Facebook

doesn't release sales figures, but it says Quest 2 sales have been better than expected, and has already outsold all of its predecessors combined since its launch.

The standalone headset doesn't need to be tethered to a computer or gaming console, and is designed for gaming with dual hand controllers.

In a call with analysts in April, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the Quest 2, while still mainly used for games, is increasingly used for activities like fitness and virtual workplaces.

"I believe that augmented and virtual reality are going to enable a deeper sense of presence and social connection than any existing platform, and they're going to be an important part of how we'll interact with computers in the future," Zuckerberg said. "So we're going to keep investing heavily in building out the best experiences here, and this accounts for a major part of our overall R&D budget growth."

"Quest 2 serves as a necessary step towards VR maturity," said Gartner analyst Tuong Nguyen. "It's also an expected step in the sense that consumers and the market have been conditioned by smartphone trends to see very regular technology upgrades." □

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# Third chapter of 'The Conjuring' franchise creaks

By **MARK KENNEDY**  
AP Entertainment Writer

The universe of "The Conjuring" proves it may be reaching its spooky limits when a demon pops up in the latest film from, of all things, a waterbed.

That such a well-worn punchline of '80s suburban life could be home to Satan's spawn might be played for camp in any other movie, but not here.

This gentle franchise is all about timeless scary stuff — swing sets that mysteriously move, battery toys that suddenly turn on and door-knobs that rattle. So the waterbed was perhaps a step too far. What's next? A demonic Frisbee? A bloody Rubik's Cube?

It's a signal that while the franchise soldiers on unironically, the films may fail to keep up with the real world, where the algebra of fear is harder now. Almost 600,000 people in America have died from a murderous airborne plague and Warner Brothers thinks it can terrify those of us who survived — now seated in theaters masked and socially distanced and slightly paranoid — with a moist bed demon?

"The Conjuring: The Devil



This image released by Warner Bros. Entertainment shows Vera Farmiga, left, and Patrick Wilson in a scene from "The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It."

Associated Press

Made Me Do It" is a fine installment but in an increasingly creaky franchise, appropriate for films that adore the sound of rotting wood floors. It leans into old school horror without really advancing the conceit or upping the scare factor. Its rules are increasingly easy to predict.

Patrick Wilson and Vera Farmiga are back as Ed

and Lorraine Warren, a pair of married, devoutly Roman Catholic paranormal pros. The last film drew them "into one of their most diabolical cases." The new one leads to "the most sinister discovery of their career." (Here's betting the fourth will be called the most "pernicious" or "baleful.")

Based on a real-life murder

trial, the movie opens with an exorcism of an 8-year-old in southern New England in 1981 that catapults the demon inside the child into the body of a family friend, Arne Johnson, who then later kills his landlord. Charged with murder, Johnson claims demonic possession, one of the first known cases in which that defense is used.

David Leslie Johnson-McGoldrick's screenplay — he also co-wrote "The Conjuring 2" — uses that real history and then opens it up to a wider mystery, which may include a missing teenager in another state. The Warrens must find out who is behind it and stop them. "A master Satanist is not an adversary taken lightly," they are warned.

Director Michael Chaves has real skill with eeriness but we can also see the patterns: Quiet scenes start ordinarily until an odd occurrence happens — say, a cereal box shakes — then the music gets ominous and the camera gets shaky before the split-second shocking addition of a disturbing figure.

Fans of the franchise get some nice call-backs to Elvis and the demonic doll Anabel, while newcomers and veterans alike may never be able to listen to Blondie's "Call Me" the same way again.

The "Conjuring" universe, kicked off by creator James Wan, now includes three "Conjuring" films and such movies as "Annabelle" and "Annabelle: Creation," "The Nun" and "Annabelle Comes Home." □

## Kelly Osbourne opens up about drug and alcohol addictions



This image released by Red Table Talk shows TV personality Kelly Osbourne, who will appear in an episode of the talk show series to discuss her battle with drug and alcohol addiction. The episode will be available on Wednesday, June 2 on Facebook Watch.

Associated Press

By **MARK KENNEDY**  
AP Entertainment Writer  
**NEW YORK (AP)** — Kelly Osbourne is opening up

about her battles with drug and alcohol addiction, stopping by "Red Table Talk" to discuss get-

ting hooked as a teen and relapsing after the pandemic.

The TV personality said she ended almost four years of sobriety in April 2021 as the COVID-19 pandemic was waning, triggered into drinking alcohol again after seeing a couple sipping champagne.

"I was alone, sitting by a pool and waiting for somebody to come have a meeting with me. And I saw this woman and her husband had a glass of champagne. It looked really nice and I was like, 'I can do that, too,'" she said on the Facebook Watch show. "And the next day, I had two glasses. And the day after that, it was bottles."

Osbourne's episode of

"Red Table Talk" airs on Facebook Watch on Wednesday at 9 a.m. PDT/noon EDT.

Osbourne also told the hosts — Jada Pinkett Smith, her daughter, Willow Smith; and her mother, Adrienne Banfield-Norris — about the origins of her addictions.

Her first opiate-based drug addiction was with Vicodin which was prescribed to her after an operation to remove her tonsils when she was 13, sending her on a lifelong battle. "That was all I needed," she said sadly.

Osbourne said the drug silenced her insecurities. "It felt like life gave me a hug." Pinkett Smith responded wryly: "Vicodin will do that." Osbourne

added that Vicodin led to her misusing Percocet to eventually heroin "because it was cheaper."

Osbourne has discussed her drug and alcohol battles before in several interviews, her 2017 memoir and on podcasts like Dax Shepard's "Armchair Expert."

She has said her drug use became the heaviest during her mother's cancer battle and after her father, "Crazy Train" singer Ozzy Osbourne, almost died after an ATV accident in 2003.

"Red Table Talk" has recently made headlines with its interview with Olivia Jade Gianulli and when Pinkett Smith and her husband, Will Smith, discussed their marriage. □

# Essential Quality is 2-1 morning line favorite for Belmont

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Essential Quality was set Tuesday as a 2-1 favorite for the Belmont Stakes, which will be run Saturday without a horse from trainer Bob Baffert pending an investigation into Medina Spirit's failed drug test after winning the Kentucky Derby. Preakness winner Rombauer and Essential Quality headline a field of eight horses for the third jewel of the Triple Crown. Baffert has no horses running at Belmont Park because the New York Racing Association suspended him in light of Medina Spirit's positive drug test for a corticosteroid at the Derby.

Essential Quality, who drew the No. 2 post position, went off as the Derby favorite and finished fourth. Brad Cox's other Derby horse, Mandaloun, would be named the winner of that race if Medina Spirit is disqualified, but Cox opted to run only Essential Quality in the Belmont.

"He's a valid favorite for sure," Hot Rod Charlie's trainer, Doug O'Neill, said of Essential Quality. "He didn't have the greatest of trips in the Derby and ran a dynamite fourth. You've got to



**Kentucky Derby entrant Essential Quality waits to work out at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky., in this Thursday, April 29, 2021, file photo.**

Associated Press

get through him. The win goes through him, for sure." Rombauer is the 3-1 second choice on the morning line. Jockey Flavien Prat left Rombauer despite winning the Preakness to honor a commitment to ride Hot Rod Charlie, who is the 7-2 third choice from the No. 4 position.

"It's a lot of respect that they're giving Charlie,"

O'Neill said.

Hall of Famer John Velazquez will ride Rombauer, who drew the third post position just outside Essential Quality and No. 1 Bourbonic, who is back after skipping the Preakness. Bourbonic is 15-1, No. 5 France Go de Ina is 30-1, No. 6 Known Agenda is 6-1, No. 7 Rock Your World is 9-2 and No. 8 Overtook 20-1.

"I think the key to the race is how much pace with Essential Quality, Hot Rod Charlie and Rock Your World," said trainer Todd Pletcher, who has three of the eight horses in the race: Bourbonic, Known Agenda and Overtook.

Pletcher's longtime assistant, Michael McCarthy, won the Preakness with Rombauer in first Triple

Crown race as a trainer. Pletcher joked, "The pressure's all on him," going into the Belmont.

It might actually be on Cox given the lofty expectations on Essential Quality. Retired jockey Jerry Bailey said that considering the rough trip Essential Quality got in the Derby, the gray colt was the best horse in the race.

"He is just a grinder," said Bailey, who is now an NBC Sports analyst. "He's built perfectly for this kind of race. His running style is exactly the style that you want for the Belmont Stakes. He just keeps coming. That he definitely has in his favor."

The 1 1/2-mile distance is the unknown. The Belmont is back to its traditional "test of the champion" distance on the giant Belmont Park oval known as "Big Sandy" after the race was shortened in 2020 because it led off the Triple Crown.

"We're kind of in the same boat as everybody here," France Go de Ina exercise rider Masaki Tanako said through interpreter Kate Hunter. "No one's run a mile and a half before, so we're all on the same page." □

## MLB .236 batting average though May lowest since 1968

By RONALD BLUM

**NEW YORK (AP)** — The major league batting average rose slightly in May, though it remained at its lowest level in 53 years.

Hitters batted .239 in May, up from .232 in April and the lowest average for May since .237 in 1972, the Elias Sports Bureau said Tuesday.

The .236 average for the season through May 31 is the lowest since .229 in 1968 — the last season before the pitcher's mound was lowered from 15 inches to 10.

May's .315 on-base percentage was up from .309 in April but the lowest for May since .314 in 2015. The .312 through May 31 is the lowest since .309 in 1972.

In an era of dominance on home runs, slugging per-

centage did not decline as much. The .397 percentage in May was the lowest since .395 in 2014 and the .393 percentage for the season through May 31 was the lowest since .392 in 2014.

Strikeouts exceeded hits by 838 in May after topping them by 1,091 in April, Elias said. Strikeouts had never exceeded hits over a full calendar month before May 2018.

Strikeouts have averaged 8.99 per team per game, on pace to set a record for the 13th consecutive full season — up from 8.81 two years ago and nearly double the 4.77 in 1979. Strikeouts already are 1,929 ahead of hits, just three years after exceeding hits for the first time over a full season.

Hits have averaged 7.78 per team per game, the second-lowest behind 7.75 in 1908 during the dead-ball era.

Seattle is hitting .205, on track to break the record low of .211 set by the 1910 Chicago White Sox.

There have been six no-hitters, by San Diego's Joe Musgrove (April 9), Carlos Rodón of the Chicago White Sox (April 9), Baltimore's John Means (May 5), Cincinnati's Wade Miley (May 7), Detroit's Spencer Turnbull (May 18) and the New York Yankees' Corey Kluber (May 19). In addition, Arizona's Madison Bumgarner had a seven-inning hitless game in a doubleheader on April 25 that is not recognized as a no-hitter by Major League Baseball.



**Chicago White Sox's Nick Madrigal strikes out swinging in the seventh inning of the second baseball game of a doubleheader against the Cleveland Indians, Monday, May 31, 2021, in Cleveland.**

Associated Press

One more no-hitter would match 1990, 1991, 2012 and 2015 for the most since 1900, one shy of the record eight in 1884 — the first season overhand

pitching was allowed. Home runs have averaged 1.13 per team per game, down from 1.28 last year and the lowest since 2015's 1.01. □

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## Even more questions for Osaka when she returns

By **TIM DAHLBERG**  
AP Sports Columnist

Unfortunately for Naomi Osaka, the questions will keep coming. There's nowhere to run and certainly no place to hide when you're a superstar traveling the world and playing on the biggest stages in tennis. Some of the questions may be repetitive. Some may even be a bit negative, though for the most part those in the tennis media tend to treat top players with kid gloves.

Regardless, it's part of her job to answer them. That's not going to change, even with Osaka's withdrawal from the French Open after refusing to appear at the news conferences every other top player accepts as part of the job.

Only now she'll have even more questions to answer. That's not entirely Osaka's fault, though she did herself no favors by the clumsy way she handled her mini media revolt in Paris. She blew off her first post-match news conference, after declaring earlier in a posting online that she didn't want to hear the same questions over and over and saying that reporters tend to kick players while they are down.

In other words, she didn't want to answer questions about why she didn't play better on clay.

Osaka rebounded a bit in a second statement announcing her withdrawal, and that's where it gets



**Naomi Osaka, of Japan, reacts during her match against Maria Sakkari, of Greece, in the quarterfinals of the Miami Open tennis tournament in Miami Gardens, Fla., in this Wednesday, March 31, 2021, file photo.**

tricky. She revealed she had suffered long periods of depression after winning the U.S. Open in 2018 and that she suffers great anxiety when faced with having to answer questions from journalists at news conferences.

We all can — and should — be sympathetic to that. Depression and anxiety can be devastating and debilitating, as anyone who has suffered from them or dealt with a family member who has them knows so well.

Nobody should begrudge Osaka's decision to withdraw from a major championship because she's

having trouble coping with those issues. Indeed, we should all support her efforts to improve her mental health while dealing with everything else that comes with being a global star at the tender age of 23.

But let's make this clear: This isn't a media problem. It isn't a news conference problem.

Frankly, until Osaka said she would not show up for her news conference and then blew off tournament organizers who wondered why, no one even knew there was a problem.

There's nothing inherently wrong with a system that

requires athletes who are paid millions of dollars to perform to be asked about their play afterward. There's also nothing wrong with reporters asking an occasional question that may not fit the positive narrative Osaka wants when writing about the newest star in tennis.

It's part of the reason why tournaments like the French Open sell out expensive seats every year. It's a lot of the reason Forbes said Osaka made \$37 million in 2019, most of it in endorsements from companies that expect Osaka to generate lots of press for their products.

Her compelling story of winning back-to-back major championships beginning at the age of 20 combined with her Japanese-Haitian heritage made her a star. But, as the stars who came before her understood well, part of the deal every

player accepts is that they answer a few post-match questions at tournaments, win or lose.

"I understand her," Rafael Nadal said. "(But) without the press, without the people who normally is traveling who are writing the news and achievements that we are having around the world probably we will not be the athletes that we are today."

Just why Osaka picked the opening of the French Open to make her ill-advised stand isn't quite clear. She may not have wanted to be asked about her struggles on clay, but the question is a legitimate one she easily could have given a noncommittal answer to and moved on.

She picked a media boycott instead, then followed it with a withdrawal when it became obvious her position was untenable among both tournament officials and her fellow players.

Frankly, the people around Osaka should have stepped in long before it got this far. They should have let her know that if she was willing to answer questions about her new Nike apparel line she should have been able to figure out a way to answer questions about her tennis.

Instead, she painted herself into a corner, then was forced to walk away. No one was a winner, including a major championship that badly needed her star power on the women's side. Hopefully, the time off serves Osaka well. Assuming her issues are as deep as she says — and there's no reason to assume otherwise — a long break may be just what she needs. Just understand that there will be even more questions when she returns. □